

Random Encounters

All Adrift on the Dune Sea

By Skip Williams



A Plague of Scorpions

Recently, the Dune Sea's population of monstrous scorpions has exploded, producing vast numbers of the deadly creatures. Many of them are even bigger and nastier than usual. These overabundant predators now range over the entire area, seeking every bit of living prey they can find. Two of them, both huge monstrous scorpions, lie in wait on the PCs' path, ready to attack and devour the first characters that come within reach.



When the PCs enter the scorpions' hunting grounds, they see a few clues indicating the presence of a big predator in the form of freshly picked bones of wild camels and big shards of invertebrate exoskeletons. These are the remains of the scorpions' victims. They sting their prey to death, then suck the fluids from their bodies, leaving behind dry husks. Vultures and other scavengers did the rest. Unfortunately, it's nearly impossible to tell exactly what killed all the creatures, and the ever-present desert winds have scoured away all the tracks. A Survival or Knowledge (nature) check (DC 10) reveals the species of the victims (wild camels and monstrous spiders and scorpions of up to Large size). A Survival or Knowledge (nature) check (DC 15) reveals that the remains are no more than a day old. A Survival or Knowledge (nature) check (DC 25) reveals claw marks on the exoskeletons and some broken bones on the skeletons, both indicating that considerable force was applied to the bodies.

Local tales say the giant vermin of the Dune Sea have natural camouflage that makes them hard to see, but that's not entirely correct. The PCs aren't likely to see either scorpion until it's too late, but that's because of the hunting methods the scorpions use. They have buried themselves in the sand, not too deep, but well enough to get completely out of sight. They're so well covered they can't see, but they rely on their tremorsense to alert them to prey nearby. When someone comes within about 30 feet, they burst out of hiding and charge.

Nothing short of X-ray vision can reveal the scorpions as they lie in wait, but a Survival check (DC 20) reveals two low mounds of sand where the scorpions hide. If no one spots the mounds, the scorpions surprise the group. The scorpions rush the nearest PC and try to grab with their claws. Once a scorpion gets a hold on someone, it tries to sting the victim. After a sting, the scorpion drops its victim and tries to grab someone else (it counts on its poison to finish off its prey). If reduced to less than half its hit points, a scorpion tries to grab a character and run off.

Huge Monstrous Scorpions (2): hp 75 each; see *Monster Manual* page 287.

Bringing the Parts Together

Calibmennon, the androsphinx from "Not Exactly a Thorn in His Paw," is searching for the nest from which these two scorpions came. The whole vicinity is infested with monstrous scorpions of various sizes, both dead and alive. If the PCs look around for a few hours, they'll encounter more monstrous scorpions on the hunt, and a fair number of dead ones. Many of these are dried husks (the victims of other monstrous scorpions), and some are still a little gooey. Calibmennon dealt with the latter.

Coming in Part 2 of All Adrift on the Dune Sea

See what Calibmennon is up to!

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